

hypnotic tones of the masked woman. "The only one who can help her now is herself," she sung, as though reading my mind.

I looked on with fear and awe as my melodious host began to slowly remove her mask. As the mask rose from her face, the golden door, Calliope's door, began to swing open of its own accord behind her.

"Free my pets, Xavier. Free my beautiful beasts..."

At the very moment the masked woman pulled the mask entirely off her face, she vanished. Though I do not know with the aid of what god or force she managed it; perhaps it was, as she claimed, due to the will of Zeus himself. One moment she was standing in front of me and the next she phase-shifted into another reality. Behind where she had been standing the doorway leading into the Hall of Calliope swung fully open, bathing me in a fluorescent azure radiance.

I walked slowly up and through that golden doorway into an indescribable place where no human was meant to wander. A long hallway stretched as far as I could see, descending at a slight angle down into a lingering sapphire mist. I feel certain that beyond this lay another hall, and another, and another; each leading deeper into the heart of the Earth, each filled with inexpressibly beautiful, but terribly malevolent, pets.

I tell you that the Hall of Calliope is indescribable not because I am unable to speak of those fantastic mythological monstrosities I saw held within the countless holding pens, and not because I am unable to paint images of those same pets. I tell you that the pets contained within the nearly infinite number of holding pens within the Hall of Calliope are indescribable precisely because I fear that by the very act of describing them, even with the very words you see here before you on this page, that they shall be released.

There I stood, at the threshold of the Hall of Calliope, where few men have ever stood, amidst the goblins, the elves, the unicorns, the dragons, the medusa, the titans, the gorgons, the angels, the genii, and the daemons. It was within my grasp to

compose paintings the likes of which the world had never seen. And I wept like no man has wept, nor shall ever weep again. For the Muses had offered me what all artists seek, but I could not accept.

Xavier Mattise,

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